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THE SPREAD OF THE SURVEY IDEA ¹

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Director of the Pittsburgh Survey, 1907-09

IN most of our social movements, we are under the necessity of starting something going. We must stir up interest as the first step. The survey movement, if we can call it that, does not seem to be handicapped in this way. There is more spontaneous outcropping of the survey idea the country round than as yet we have any sufficient organization or body of trained workers to deal with. Close on the heels of Pittsburgh came Buffalo. The pioneer work in the steel district was instigated by Charities Publication Committee and was carried out in coöperation with militant Pittsburghers, under grants from the Russell Sage Foundation. The study of the Polish section of Buffalo was the first undertaking of the sort instigated and financed by the city surveyed. Then we had that interesting state-wide tour of Kentucky by Mrs. Caroline Bartlett Crane, which was a quick sizing up of conditions in a group of smaller cities under the State Board of Health and the State Federation of Women's Clubs. We know of the series of community studies carried out by Mr. Aronovici in Rhode Island, and by Mr. St. John and Mr. Stelzle in Newark, Sag Harbor and elsewhere; the studies of the Huntington Presbytery in seven counties in central Pennsylvania; the work of the Presbyterian Board in its rural surveys in Illinois, Missouri and Pennsylvania; and the scores of neighborhoods, mill and mining towns which the Federal Immigration Commission caught up in their schedules. Last summer the Associated Charities of Syracuse, the Chamber of Commerce, the Central Trades Assembly and the Ministerial Association joined forces in the stock-taking of a single city which is described (p. 8) by Mr. Harrison; while the findings of the Lowell survey are just out in book form. Booth's *London*, Rowntree's *York*, the *Hull-House Books and Papers*, the

¹ Read at the meeting of the Academy of Political Science, April 18, 1912

South End House Studies, Mr. Kirk's *Providence*, Dr. Roberts' *Anthracite Coal Communities*, the Washington number of *Charities and The Commons* are instances, all of them, of social investigations which have embodied many of the elements we find in the survey idea, but which are not identified with the more or less crystallized movement which to-day engages our attention. For I have before me four closely typewritten sheets, thoroughly covered with the names of cities and organizations which are either embarked on surveys or are considering surveys, or would like to know more about them. The names of Minnesota, Missouri, Texas and Kansas towns show the spread of the idea no less than those of the four chief cities of the British Northwest. One inquiry comes from India.

Just at this juncture, the more immediate aspect of the movement presents itself in the fact that in nearly every city in which the Men and Religion Forward teams have set forth a social program, one of the planks in that program has been to recommend a social survey. So we are faced with the question: What is a survey, and how shall the residents of the average city go about one, with some prospect that they will be doing a craftsman's job of it? We know in a general way that a survey is something different from the ordinary operations of a municipal league or a charitable society or a settlement—different even from their campaigns for special reforms. We know also that it is different from newspaper work, or a civic exhibit, or an official report or scientific research as such; although we may have an inkling that it partakes of all of these things, in one way or another. What then? What elements distinguish the survey? The papers by Mr. Harrison, Miss Goldmark and Dr. Palmer give concrete answers and give them with a precision and taking quality which can scarcely be bettered by any generalizations. They tell, however, of three fairly well-defined types of survey; and it will help in arriving at a working conception of the survey idea, to run over some of the elements common to all.

And first, for purposes of comparison, let me set down the elements, five in number, which we felt at the close of the Pittsburgh Survey made that a distinctive enterprise. These methods were:

1. To bring a group of experts together to coöperate with local leaders in gauging the social needs of one city.
2. To study these needs in relation to each other, to the whole area of the city, and to the civic responsibilities of democracy.
3. To consider at the same time both civic and industrial conditions, and to consider them for the most part in their bearings upon the wage-earning population.
4. To reduce conditions to terms of household experience and human life.
5. To devise graphic methods for making these findings challenging, clear and unmistakable.

If I were recasting this formula to-day, I do not know that I should want to change it materially. But it will perhaps give a better approach to the survey movement to consider not what sets it off from other undertakings, but what it draws upon them for.

First of all, the survey takes its unit of work from the surveyor. It has to do with a subject matter, to be sure, but that subject matter is subordinated to the idea of a definite geographical area. It is quite possible to carry on a study of tuberculosis, for example, as a piece of physiological research, or as a piece of sociological research, wholly apart from where it occurs. But just as a geological survey is not geology in general, but the geology of a given mountain range or water shed, so, even when a special subject matter is under study, the sociological survey adds an element of locality, of neighborhood or city, state or region, to what would otherwise pass under the general term of an investigation.

And when the subject matter is not specialized, but concerns the more intangible "needs" of a community, the survey becomes necessarily different things in different localities. It cannot be thought out at a far-away desk. It is responsive to local conditions; in a worn-out country district, suffering from what Professor Ross calls "folk-depletion," its content has little in common with that of a survey in a textile center, tense with human activity, and dominated by its terms of work.

In the second place, the survey takes from the physician his art of applying to the problems at hand standards and experi-

ence worked out elsewhere. To illustrate, if your pure scientist were studying the housing situation in a given town, he would start out perhaps without any hypotheses, tabulate every salient fact as to every house, cast up long columns of figures, and make careful deductions, which might and might not be worth the paper they were written on. Your housing reformer and your surveyor ought to know at the start what good ventilation is, and what cellar dwellings are. These things have been studied elsewhere, just as the medical profession has been studying hearts and lungs until they know the signals which tell whether a man's organs are working right or not, and what to look for in making a diagnosis.

In the third place, the survey takes from the engineer his working conception of the structural relation of things. There is a building element in surveys. When we look at a house, we know that carpenters have had a good deal to do with it, and it is possible to investigate just what the carpenters have done; also the bricklayers, the steam-fitters and the rest of the building trades. But your engineer, like your general contractor and architect, has to do with the work of each of these crafts in its relation to the work of every other. So it is with a survey, whether it deals with the major elements entering into a given community which has structural parts of a given master problem such as Dr. Palmer describes in his survey of the sanitary conditions in Springfield. Only recently I received a letter from a man engaged in making a general social survey of a manufacturing town—a so-called survey. He did not think that it was truly a survey, nor did I, because out of the scope of that investigation had been left all of the labor conditions in the mills. The local committee had been fearful of raising opposition in forceful quarters. Yet these labor conditions were basic in the town's life; on them, for better or worse, hung much of the community welfare; and by ignoring them, the committee could deal with partial solutions only. It was as if a diagnostician in making his examination had left a patient's stomach out of consideration because the patient was a dyspeptic and irritable. They had violated the structural integrity of their survey.

In the fourth place, the survey takes from the charity-organization movement its case-work method of bringing problems down to human terms. Death rates exemplify human units in their barest essentials; but I have in mind a more developed unit. Let me illustrate from the Pittsburgh Survey in the painstaking figures we gathered of the household cost of sickness—lost wages, doctor's bills, medicines, ice, hospitals, funerals, the aftermath of an epidemic in lowered vitality and lowered earnings, household by household—not in sweeping generalizations but in what Mr. Woods called "piled-up actualities." If I were to set one touchstone, more than another, to differentiate the true survey from social prospecting, it would be this case-work method. In employing it the surveyor, because of lack of means and time, must often deal with samples rather than with the whole population coming within the scope of his study. These samples may be groups of school children; or the people who die in a certain year; or those who live in a certain ward. The method is one, of course, which is scientifically justifiable only so long as those who employ it can defend their choice of the sample chosen, and show where it does and does not represent the entire group.

Under this head it is to be noted that the survey is in a field friendly to what we have come to call municipal research. The latter is indebted for its methods of unit-costs and efficiency to the accountants. These methods may be applied to city budgets and city departments as an integral part of a social survey, the distinction between the two movements in practise being perhaps that the one is focused primarily on governmental operations; the other on phenomena imbedded in the common life of the people.

In the fifth place, the survey takes from the journalist the idea of graphic portrayal, which begins with such familiar tools of the surveyor as maps and charts and diagrams, and reaches far through a scale in which photographs and enlargements, drawings, casts and three-dimension exhibits exploit all that the psychologists have to tell us of the advantages which the eye holds over the ear as a means for communication. With these the survey links a sturdy effort to make its findings have less in

common with the boredom of official reports than with the more engaging qualities of newspaper "copy"—especially that simplicity of structure, tangible framework, and readability which American magazine men have developed as their technique in writing for a democracy. This is not a counsel, bear in mind, of flimsy sensationalism; although those who have matters to conceal seek to confuse the two. A startling article patched up from a few glints of fact is a very different proposition from a crystal set in a matrix of tested information.

Underlying this factor of graphic portrayal is the factor of truth; truth plus publicity. It is often possible to work out large and definite reforms internally, by getting a group of forceful men around a table and convincing them that so and so is the right thing to do. This is, I take it, a legitimate method of philanthropic work and of social reform. But it is not the method of a survey. The survey's method is one of publicity; it is another and separate implement for social advance, and its usefulness should not be negated by a failure to hold to its distinctive function. The philosophy of the survey is to set forth before the community all the facts that bear on a problem, and to rely upon the common understanding, the common forethought, the common purpose of all the people as the first great resource to be drawn upon in working that problem out. Thus conceived, the survey becomes a distinctive and powerful implement of democracy.

With these five working principles in mind, how can the survey idea be applied to the average community, how and on what scale should its working scheme be launched? Here there is already some experience upon which to draw. At one extreme we have a superficial skimming of facts—what we call in the Middle West a lick-and-a-promise. Perhaps it is limited to passing round and filling out schedules devised to fit any city—such as were used in many places in advance of the Men and Religion campaign week. These were not without value in throwing some facts of community life into relief and in showing where released energies might at once be applied; but the team leaders very properly did not call them surveys, making them rather a basis for recommending the larger work.

They bear about the same relation to a survey that the blanks which a mail-order tailoring establishment sends out for self-measurement bear to a thorough-going physical examination.

At the other end of the scale we have the sort of a survey which the Pittsburg Survey, if we regard it as an experiment, demonstrated can with staff and resources some day be made in one of our first-class cities. The Pittsburgh Survey made a quick diagnosis of perhaps twenty phases of life and labor in the steel district on the basis of standards worked out elsewhere; it brought these diagnoses together and studied something of the structural relation of the problems set forth; but it sank shafts of definite, consistent, active investigation in but five or six fields and even there rigorous limitations had to be set to the scope of the work. For example, we studied, case by case, 500 families to see how they actually made shift when the bread-winner was killed at his day's work. The super-survey would not only gauge the chief factors entering into a community, gauge also their fabrication into its general working scheme; but would study the human bearings of every factor, as searchingly as we studied the economic reaction of these industrial accidents.

Not a few of the elements in such a survey will ultimately be carried out as part of the routine work of our governmental, institutional and industrial organizations. This was illustrated in the recommendation made by a stockholders' committee at the recent meeting of the United States Steel Corporation. The work which the Pittsburgh Survey put into gathering elementary facts as to hours, wages and other labor conditions in the Pittsburgh district exhausted a very considerable share of our funds and energy. This stockholders' committee held that in the same way that their corporation had taken the lead in publishing extensive reports on its financial operations and output, it should be its policy in the future to lay before stockholders and public the general facts as to labor conditions in their mills. That, it seemed to me, was well-nigh revolutionary. Similarly many of our city and state departments—health, labor, finance and education—are putting out more and more as part of their legitimate routine the salient facts upon which public opinion can formulate working judgments.

If this were done generally, the survey, to my mind, would still be an opportune instrument for social advance;—on its civic side, in enabling us to see whether or not there are great gaps in the frontage with which a community faces the future, and on its scientific side, in measuring the human reaction of various institutions, agencies and measures, which are carried forward in the name of progress and which should be tested and checked up from time to time.

But what we can discuss most profitably here is the sort of undertaking which as things stand to-day a community, ranging anywhere from ten thousand to half a million, can take up,—neither a skimping survey that does not get beneath the surface, nor the comprehensive interlocking survey just outlined which must needs require a large staff and resources. What are we to recommend when a group of progressive people in such a community come forward and say they want to start a survey—a group with only general notions as to the things most seriously in need of inquiry in their locality, and with slender funds which may grow only as the undertaking shows its usefulness? Two lines of action seem most promising.

The first of these is to recommend that they secure a man of all-around experience in social work to come to their community for a quick sizing up of things—a report which will enable them to see where the land lies—and either base a general social survey upon this report, or follow up intensively one or more of the principal “leads” disclosed.

The second possible line of action is to start out with some unit less than the general social problem of their city, with the idea that work less spread-out and more exact will in the long run lead farther. There are several ways in which this can be done. One method is to take a given neighborhood, in the way that the Buffalo survey took its Polish district. This method has the advantage of focusing attention on a manageable area, where definite results (like the Buffalo playgrounds and evening schools for immigrants) can be reached while the survey is in process. It has the disadvantage that it may tend to confirm the impressions of squalor already held by polite residents of a city as to some particular neighborhood, without forcing in

upon them the fact that a community is like a human being and none of its members can be sick without being a drag on the whole; without rousing the whole city to action, or even, as in Buffalo, leading up to a general city survey. A modification of this method was discussed in New Haven—the suggestion being to take a belt running through the town, so as to be representative of good and bad conditions alike, the well-to-do, the middling-to-do, and the poor. This plan has imaginative values, a practical obstacle perhaps being the difficulty in fitting existing sources of statistics to such a philanthropic gerrymander. Another method is to take a block and study its people intensively in the matter of their social needs and the resources of the city with respect to them, in much the same way as (from the standpoint of racial composition and social mind) Dr. Jones and Prof. Woolston have studied given New York city blocks. Such a method would unquestionably supply an exceptional group of citizens with rare insight as to the actual operations and values of much of our social work. With this insight they could reach judgments and execute reforms, but the plan would scarcely usher in that self-consciousness which comes when a whole community sees itself in the large, and which, to my mind, gives the community survey its exceptional dynamic force.

In contrast to these methods, which consider fairly small areas in their relation to a wide range of social needs, another partial method is to take some one social problem and study it in its bearings on the entire community—such a problem as recreation. This would cover not only a study of playgrounds and play opportunities, but an examination of the city play bill (nickleodeons, skating rinks, cheap shows, dance halls) as was made by the Kansas City Board of Public Welfare, to see how much fun was costing the people, how they could spend less and get more, and how far commercialized amusements should be supervised. It would cover the larger uses of school houses, substitutes for saloons, the utilization of outdoors, and the natural resources of wood and valley back from a city; the extent of leisure and the social effects of its compression through overwork and Sunday labor; the money surplus for recreation in household budgets; and so on.

While local conditions, the agencies interested, the public temper and the money available are considerations which must be duly reckoned with, my feeling is that the first line of approach described is the one which will serve most cities best;—that is, the quick sizing-up process to see how the land lies and to plant what the civil engineers call “bench marks” at points of vantage. For this work can be done on a scale to fit any town’s pocket-book, it embodies in a rudimentary way the elements which we have seen are the essential methods of a survey, and it gives perspective. The scientific farmer who has his soils examined in taking up new land, the business man who is used to inventories as a basis of planning for the year ahead, the physician who is called on less frequently to doctor fevers and set bones than to overhaul patients who are “all run down,” will not need to have the value of such a piece of preliminary stock-taking argued out with them. A town with ten thousand people can get a man with what you might call a general practitioner’s equipment in social work to spend half a week there with fair prospect that his report will be something on which they can build. Superficial though it would frankly be, it should bring the more easily recognizable needs and opportunities in the town’s life to the test of standards worked out elsewhere—which, as we have seen, is one of the first and easiest tasks of a survey. It could scarcely fail to show how health hangs on civic enterprise and in kindred ways make average citizens see that things which they may have regarded as unrelated are bound up in each other. It would correspondingly show these things in proportion. The sky-scraping pride with which a growing town points to an atrocious six or ten-story block on its chief corner is not energy any more misapplied than many a philanthropic enterprise, bred to suit city conditions, which the small town swallows hoofs, hide and all. Such a report would gather up, if rightly made, the progressive ideas held by local people who have seen farther ahead than their neighbors; and it would have the force—and that counts for a good deal in a growing community—of being heralded as the judgment of a “city expert,” thereby gaining a hearing for things which local prophets may have despaired of. Further, such a report, if it sets a vision of

what the town might be, tugs at the imagination of the people and loosens energies in many directions. The same things hold true for a larger city—the city of twenty-five to fifty thousand which can employ such a preliminary prospector for from a fortnight to six weeks; or the still larger city which can engage for this sizing-up process a man of experience and all-round equipment with two or three assistants, for a six months commission. Its alternative would be to get experts in half a dozen of the major fields of social concern to come on the ground for say a fortnight each, relying upon a local committee to synthesize these special reports into a general scheme of procedure. The Syracuse survey illustrated these two methods somewhat in combination, for Mr. Harrison spent six weeks in his general work, and various national and local bodies were successfully appealed to to carry on the field work along special lines.

Such a preliminary report once in hand, the community small or large is in much more favorable position than at the start to make constructive decisions. It may decide to carry on any one of the inquiries which I enumerated earlier as possible lines of action, only with far larger chance of their being done intelligently and with prospect of results for the whole city. It may do what Rochester is doing—that is, what might be called a consecutive survey, organizing and calling on experts to take up first one phase of social concern and then another. This is the sort of work done by the Pittsburgh Civic Commission. It may focus its efforts on some district, and there sink its inquiries into the structure of the common life. This the Bureau of Social Research under Miss Goldmark has done on a district scale on the upper west side of New York, scrutinizing in a given neighborhood how courts and charitable agencies, the departments of health and education come in contact with the life of the people—how they may be turned from impersonal machines to intimate agencies within reach of the average family. The community may focus its attention, on the other hand, on the coördination of governmental activities and by means of municipal research, budget exhibits and the like, make the public business take on new efficiency and new meaning.

But for cities of from 25,000 to 250,000 population, the

simple and natural and, I believe, most promising result of the preliminary survey, would be a systematic community survey growing out of it, one with sufficient staff, sufficient time and sufficient expenditures to make a thorough-going inventory of the life and labor of the place, to seek out the wastes in its economic and vital resources, to captivate and give constructive content to its evanescent and often sorely exploited enthusiasms, and to lay a sure foundation of information on which to plan and build for ten years ahead.

The scale on which such a permanent survey—and by permanent I of course do not mean a perennial enterprise, but one enduring in the foundation it lays—should be undertaken, would depend on the size and public spirit of the community. But the survey movement has reached a point where we can say with some degree of precision—as I have undertaken to do earlier in this paper—what are the essential methods which should enter into its work, and where we can say, with some degree of conviction, that such a working scheme will have practical and far-reaching results.

Right here, it may be well to interpolate two points as to the civic investment which a community puts into a survey. No town should be balked at launching one, under the impression that it is a contraption suited only to a large city, or one which only a great philanthropic foundation can afford. I have indicated how a small town can make a start at modest expense; and Dr. Palmer describes the wide range of sanitary investigations which he carried out as commissioner of public health of Springfield, Illinois, in coöperation with local people and at almost no extra cost to the city. With a superintendent of schools as far-sighted and resourceful as this health commissioner, a judge who would look at jails, police and legal processes with what the Wisconsin supreme court calls twentieth-century eyes, an engineer with ingenuity and vision, and with other volunteers and officials of like caliber, men with social viewpoint and with some acquaintance with other cities, men giving their leisure and to some extent their working hours to the plan, you would have a local staff for a rounded community survey. They could carry it out as a piece of good citizenship

on a level which would command national attention and respect, and which would set a new gauge for civic patriotism. On the other hand, consider a city with say a cigar-store keeper as health commissioner, without any health reports, and with acrid resistance on the part of the dominant political machine to any probing of its health service. The process of surveying in such a backward city is a very different matter; so also is the cost of bringing onto the ground a sanitarian of Dr. Palmer's breadth of outlook, gained from his work in the state and city public health service; and then keeping him there long enough to get a thorough grasp of the sanitary situation, and to gather data sufficient to carry the town with him.

And here we are close to the fact that while many of the more obvious social conditions can be brought to light by laymen, the reach of social surveying depends on those qualities which we associate with the expert in every profession; knowledge of the why of sanitary technique, for example, and of the how by which other cities have wrought out this reform and that. And townsmen who would think nothing of paying the county engineer a sizable fee to run a line for a fence boundary must be educated up to the point where they will see the economy of investing in trained service in social and civic up-building. Unscientific acquaintance with what other cities are doing may lead only to duplicating their mistakes; untraveled advice may, on the other hand, lead only to finding out slowly and at bitter cost what has elsewhere been demonstrated. Ignorance of the facts that lie concealed in an unresolved mass of local statistics is only less costly, humanly speaking, than the too ready acceptance of notions which hearty but ignorant handling can shake out of the same statistics.

My second point as to the civic investment in a survey is that it pays not only for a city to get at its underlying facts but to get those facts out into the open. There is no older subterfuge than to beat the drums of local pride and charge that the leaders who are overhauling bad conditions are injuring the fair name of a city. This charge finds customary expression in the rumor that manufacturing enterprises will keep away if they learn that the schools are poor, the council is full of graft, or

the water is infected; and that one who advertises these things by rousing the public to reform is the town traitor. Yet the city of the Southwest that, as a gala day approached, put up a high board fence so that you could not see the shacks that at one point lined its principal thoroughfare, may have fooled the distinguished visitor who was driven past, but it could not fool the manufacturer who is looking for a new site; still less—and this is equally important from the standpoint of local interests—could it fool intelligent workmen who are looking for a town in which to bring up their families. I have known of an enterprise that refused to settle in a city because it would not bribe the aldermen for a side track (perhaps the first of a long series of petty hold-ups) and of another that refused to settle where skilled mechanics could not find the sort of living conditions and recreation they were accustomed to. It could not get its men to come along. When such decisions hang in the balance I fancy one factor that counts in Worcester's favor is the fight of its manufacturers against tuberculosis, in Pittsburgh's favor is the great filtration plant with which the city has downed typhoid, in Cleveland's favor is the civic campaigns of its Chamber of Commerce. All these things stand for enterprise. They are upbuilding of the sort which means first of all getting down to bed rock; and that is the sort of investment which a city puts into a survey.

Convinced as I am, however, that a survey is "good business" in the long run from the standpoint of a city's prosperity, it has a broader appeal. It is one of the channels open to the aroused social conscience of our generation. In the governmental field we have two strong movements—one towards greater efficiency; the other towards greater democracy. The first is reflected nationally by the President's Commission on Efficiency and Economy; the second finds expression in the Western insurgent movement which through the initiative, referendum and recall, seeks to bring the legislative "say" back to the people. If we were to personify the first movement, it would be to give it the character of the expert; the second, the character of the average citizen. And in the general trend, we have the expert and the average man coming to-

gether: and jointly challenging the frontage which existing institutions, professions and organized forces bear toward the needs of the times.

They challenge the church, the school, the city council, the court, the mill, in the name of the mighty industrial changes which have put new strains on old institutions; in the name of science, which has opened new possibilities and new hopes; and in the name of the common welfare which is striking a fairer balance between property and life.

For many existing conditions we have only ourselves to blame; but in changing them, we have to overcome the resistance of those whose scheme of service to the community has grown up with the old conditions. Dr. Palmer illustrates this in what he says of the milk supply. Let us look at the milkman as a factor in the community life—an institution if you will. In the past we may have officially asked of him a certain grade of butter-fat in his milk, but that is a dairyman's standard, worked out in the cheese and butter trade. We have demanded a collar of cream as a sign of richness—the uninformed milk-drinker's notion of protecting himself against watered milk. But we are only beginning to demand what the dietitians and physicians are showing us is more important than either of these, namely, clean milk—clean milk, rendered more difficult to obtain by the very dirt and congestion of our new urban conditions; rendered vital by the laboratory discoveries of the last twenty years in bacterial diseases; rendered possible by our advances in methods of sterilization; rendered an issue among the people at large, by the demonstrable effect of dirty milk upon the health of thousands of babies—a human test, this last, such as enables the average mother and the expert sanitarian to join forces in a campaign to clean up stables and milk routes, and to put an end to dirty cans and tuberculous cows. I need not show how through all this runs the three-fold challenge in the name of mighty industrial changes, of scientific advance and of the common welfare.

That challenge is one repeated over and over again in the fields of social concern. It does not require a very wide stretch of the imagination to apply the same analysis to the Titanic

disaster. Compare the commercial demand for speed and capacity in ocean liners with the commercial demand for butter fat. Compare the blind popular demand for luxuries in cabins with the blind popular demand for a thick collar of cream. Life boats are like clean milk. Safety is a human rather than a commercial standard. Some naval experts have been preaching it for years, but their judgments have fallen on deaf ears. Now the average man at last sees; and (in high rage) he is calling for a change. Those responsible for ocean vessels are charged to make safety keep pace with the great structural changes in the shipping industry; to apply science to human well-being, as well as to speed.

In many of these deep-seated social needs, apparently some great disaster has to overtake us, and smite us, before as a people we are aroused to them, and half-blindly, often wholly unthinking of our own responsibility, demand immediate reform. This is so whether it is a dam which gives way like Austin; or a theatre which burns like the Iroquois; or a blazing school-house full of children like that at Cleveland; or a loft building like the Triangle. Coupled with this very human tendency is another, equally human. For while it takes one of these great disasters to drive the lesson home, we are faced with the fact that the feeling of exasperation and purpose, the "conscience-smittenness" of the community, more often than not fritters away before it accomplishes anything. Thus a year has already elapsed since the lives of 146 working people were snuffed out in the Triangle disaster in New York, and while public indignation has vented itself in mass meetings and safety committees, in investigating commissions and fire bills, there has been no action within the intervening twelve months which would thoroughly prevent the recurrence of such a panic fire and no sure provision which would get the people out, any more than the Titanic's meager life-boat equipment was enough to float the two cabins, the crew and the steerage, when the great boat sank. Had a modern shipload of passengers in New York harbor ever gone through the motions of getting into the life boats and away, the safety equipment of our ocean liners would have been put to a human test. That test would have

borne out what the naval experts had been saying, and would have demonstrated it so thrillingly that not only the people who were left behind on deck would have seen their own helplessness, but average citizens everywhere would have been alive to what safety means in ocean travel.

To visualize needs which are not so spectacular but are no less real, is the work of the survey—to bring them to human terms, to put the operations of the government, of social institutions and of industrial establishments to the test of individual lives, to bring the knowledge and inventions of scientists and experts home to the common imagination, and to gain for their proposals the dynamic backing of a convinced democracy.

The survey cannot count upon a catastrophe to point its morals. The public interest it creates comes harder but has better staying qualities. In so far as it must lay a framework for setting forth the wide range of needs and opportunities which fall within its field, so it has inherent the prospect of a more sustained and organic accomplishment.